

Plaquemines Barrier System- 1884 to 1988

The Plaquemines barrier shoreline lies about 45 km northwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River and about 80 km south-southeast of New Orleans (fig. 1). The arcuate barrier system is approximately 48 km long, forms the eastern flank of Barataria Bight, and extends from Grand Terre Islands to Sandy Point (chapter 1, fig. 14). The Plaquemines barrier shoreline consists of the Grand Terre Islands (west, central, and east), Cheniere Ronquille, the Bay La Mer area, Bay Joe Wise spit, Bastian Island, Shell Island, Pelican Island, and Sandy Point. These islands and spits range from 0.02 to 0.9 km wide. Barataria Pass, Pass Abel, Quatre Bayoux Pass, Pass Ronquille, Pass La Mer, Chaland Pass, Grand Bayou Pass, Coupe Bob, Fontanelle Pass, Scofield Bayou, and Dry Cypress Bayou Pass are some of the numerous tidal inlets and bayous that segment the shoreline. In addition, an extensive network of pipeline canals fragment the shoreline's landscape. The Plaquemines shoreline has undergone severe coastal erosion and land loss, primarily from a lack of sediment supply, rapid subsidence, and storm and human impacts (Adams, 1970; Adams and others, 1976; Howard, 1982; Mossa and others, 1985; Penland and Suter, 1988; Levin, 1990; Ritchie and others, 1990). Maps presented depict changes along the shoreline during the years 1884, 1932, 1956, 1973, and 1988. From these maps, linear, area, and width measurements were obtained, and rates of change were calculated to determine the amount and rapidity of change that has occurred.

MORPHOLOGY

In 1884, Plaquemines' morphology was influenced by several tidal inlets and passes, such as Barataria Pass, Quatre Bayoux Pass, Pass La Mer, Chaland Pass, Grand Bayou Pass, and two unnamed passes at both ends of Lanaux Island (1884 map). Grand Terre Island was a large and continuous barrier island that extended from Barataria Pass to Quatre Bayoux Pass. The remainder of the shoreline was dominated by deltaic headlands associated with Robinson Bayou, Grand Bayou, and Dry Cypress Bayou and flanking barrier islands and spits. Lanaux Island was a long and narrow barrier island with bulbous ends, which suggests long-shore sediment transport at both ends and an erosional center portion. By 1932, Grand Terre Island was breached, and Pass Ronquille opened east

of Quatre Bayoux Pass (1932 map). Chaland Pass had widened substantially, and Lanaux Island was breached by an unnamed tidal inlet as its eastern end welded to the mainland shoreline. Moreover, an opening developed west of Sandy Point to form Sandy Point Island. By 1956, the Grand Terre area had deteriorated and separated into three smaller barriers (1956 map). Lanaux Island, currently known as Shell Island, welded onto the mainland shoreline and evolved into a long, narrow spit. Fontanelle Pass was dredged, and Scofield Bayou developed naturally, forming two new entrances along the shoreline.

By 1973, Grand Terre Island was reduced to less than half its original size with only fragmentary island remnants remaining between Pass Abel and Quatre Bayoux Pass (1973 map). This fragmentary nature of the shoreline had developed between Pass Abel and Chaland Pass. Jetties at Fontanelle Pass (known as Empire jetties) blocked longshore sediment transport to the west-northwest, and a downdrift offset occurred. Large volumes of sand deposited against the updrift jetty to the east caused seaward advance, while the area to the west experienced inadequate sediment supply and shoreline recession. The Plaquemines shoreline appears to be reaching a complete breakdown in the coastal system (1988 map). The Grand Terre Islands no longer form a protective barrier for Barataria Bay. Submergence, a decreasing sediment supply, and human impacts have caused large areas of back-barrier marsh to be converted to open water (Britsch and Kemp, 1990). In 1979, Hurricane Bob breached Shell Island (Coupe Bob), and the island further deteriorated (see Neumann and others, 1985).

SHORELINE MOVEMENT

Magnitude and rate of change, as well as island width for the Plaquemines coast, were derived from 149 shore-normal transects along the gulf and bay shorelines (transects map; tables 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28). Comparisons of shoreline position are made for the periods 1884 vs. 1932, 1932 vs. 1956, 1956 vs. 1973, 1973 vs. 1988, and 1884 vs. 1988. Proximity of the shore-normal transects to entrances (tidal inlets) is also provided.

The average rate of change between 1884 and 1932 along the gulf shoreline was -5.5 m/yr. This average rate decreased to -4.1 and -3.2 m/yr for the periods 1932 and 1956, and 1956 and 1973, respectively. However, the rate increased threefold to -9.9 m/yr between 1973 and 1988 (fig. 37, table 28). This period coincides with the occurrence of Hurricanes Bob (1979) and Juan (1985). The impacts of these hurricanes on the fragile Plaquemines shoreline probably contributed to the increased rate of retreat of the gulf shoreline over the last 15 years.

The bayside rate of change between 1884 and 1932 averaged 2.2 m/yr (table 26). From 1932 to 1956, the shoreline continued to migrate landward at a slower rate of 0.2 m/yr and reversed directions to increase to -2.3 m/yr between 1956 and 1973. Bayside movement reversed again to migrate landward at 3.7 m/yr between 1973 and 1988 (fig. 38). A sudden reverse of the bay shoreline landward suggests storm impacts (hurricanes or cold fronts). Elevated water levels associated with storms carry sediment across islands and deposit it as washover along the bay shoreline to result in shoreline progradation. Hurricanes Bob and Juan directly impacted the Plaquemines shoreline and produced washover deposits (Neumann and others, 1985; Case, 1986; Penland and others, 1987, 1989c; Ritchie and others, 1990).

The 1884 vs. 1988 map illustrates land loss and quantitative changes for the Plaquemines barrier system. The rate of gulfside change along individual transects ranged from 1.9 to -15.6 m/yr (table 28). Three locations exhibited stable or accretionary trends: west Grand Terre Island, west Shell Island, and the land east of Fontanelle Pass. Grand Terre and Shell islands experienced accretion from spit processes, but the land east of Fontanelle Pass is on the updrift side of the Empire jetties, which capture sediment in the longshore transport system. The average gulfside rate of change was -5.5 m/yr (table 28), and the bayside rate of change ranged from 12.5 to -4.7 m/yr, with an average rate of 0.4 m/yr (table 26). The average width narrowed from 487 to 263 m between 1884 and 1988 (fig. 39, table 27) because the gulf shoreline migrated landward about five times faster than the bay shoreline (-5.5 m/yr vs. 0.4 m/yr, respectively). Barrier widths for 1884 and 1988 are shown in figure 40.

AREA AND WIDTH CHANGE

Coalescing deltaic headlands with numerous spits dominate the Plaquemines shoreline. Therefore Grand Terre and Shell islands are the only locations along the Plaquemines coast where true area calculations could be obtained.

Grand Terre

In 1884, the area of Grand Terre was 1,699 ha with an average width of 909 m (tables 27 and 29). By 1932, both area and width decreased to 1,058 ha and 701 m, respectively. The average rate of land loss between 1884 and 1932 was 13.4 ha/yr, a 38 percent decrease in island area. By 1956, the area of Grand Terre was 901 ha and the average width 670 m. As width decreases in response to gulf and bayside erosion, area decreases. Between 1932 and 1956, the average rate of change decreased 15 percent to -6.5 ha/yr. By 1973, area had contracted further to 675 ha, while island width decreased to 608 m. Between 1956 and 1973, area decreased by 25 percent, or an average rate of 13.3 ha/yr. Between 1973 and 1988, the rate of land loss slowed slightly to -10.8 ha/yr (fig. 41).

Overall, the area of Grand Terre Island decreased 1,186 ha at a rate of 11.4 ha/yr between 1884 and 1988 (fig. 42, table 29). Island width decreased from 909 to 530 m, an average island narrowing rate of 3.6 m/yr (fig. 43).

Shell Island

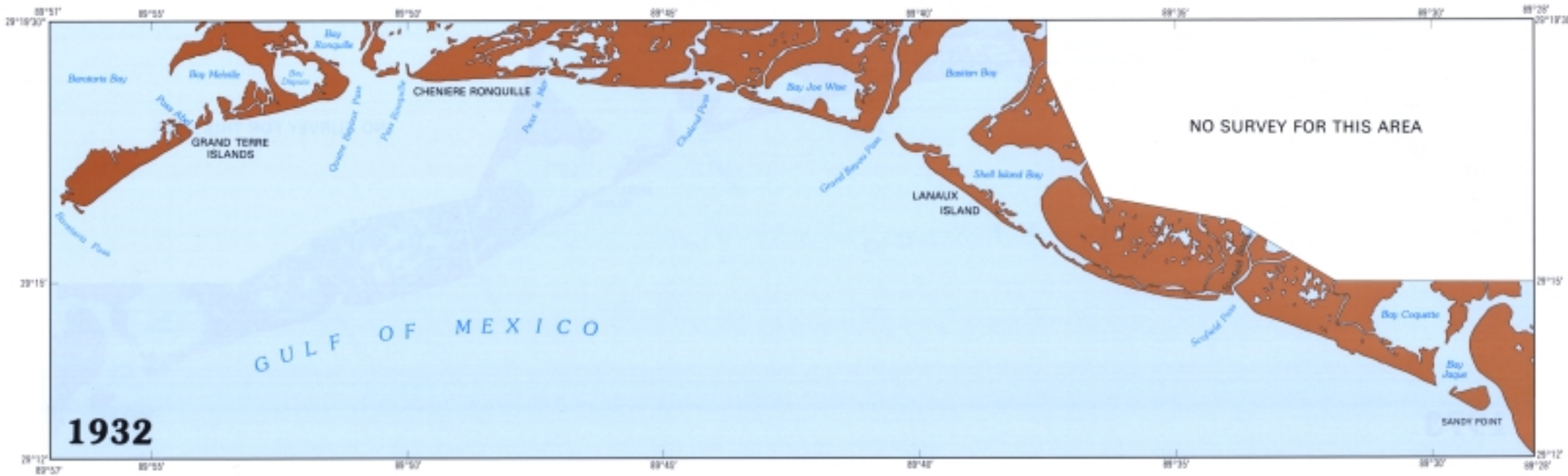
In 1884, the area of Shell Island was 127 ha with an average width of 136 m (tables 27 and 30). By 1932, area and width increased to 175 ha and 247 m as the island grew in size at a rate of 1.0 ha/yr (fig. 44). Between 1932 and 1956, the rate of change slowed to 0.1 ha/yr. Area remained relatively stable at 178 ha, while the width showed an increase to 269 m. By 1973, the size of the island decreased to 144 ha at a rate of 2.0 ha/yr. Similarly, island width narrowed to 207 m. The land loss rate further increased to -5.0 ha/yr between 1973 and 1988 as both area and width experienced nearly a 50 percent decrease to 69 ha and 105 m, respectively.

Shell Island decreased 46 percent between 1884 and 1988 (fig. 45, table 30). Its width decreased 55 m to represent an average narrowing rate of 0.5 m/yr for the last 104 years (fig. 46).

• Historic Shorelines.



Plaquemines



Plaquemines



Plaquemines

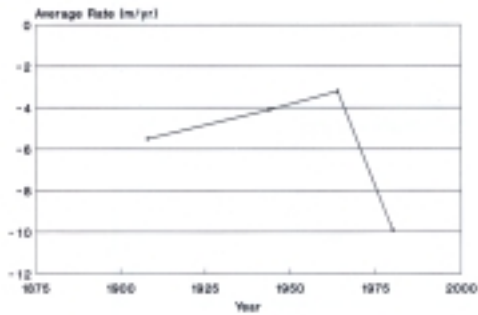


FIGURE 37.—Average gulfside rate of change along the Plaquemines shoreline between 1884 and 1988.

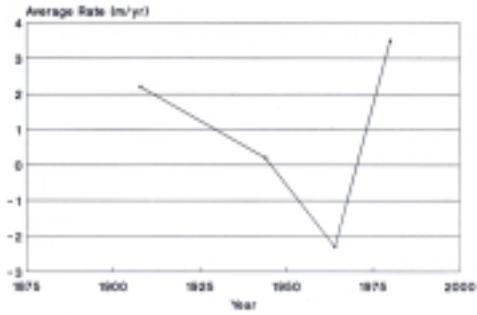


FIGURE 38.—Average bayside rate of change along the Plaquemines shoreline between 1884 and 1988.



FIGURE 39.—Average barrier width of the Plaquemines shoreline between 1884 and 1988.

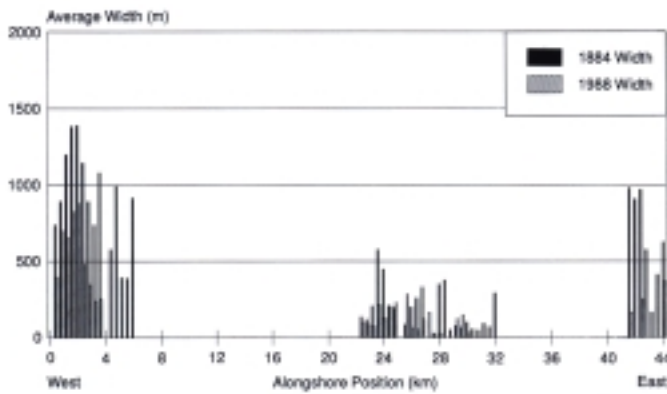


FIGURE 40.—Comparison of the 1884 and 1988 barrier widths along the Plaquemines shoreline.

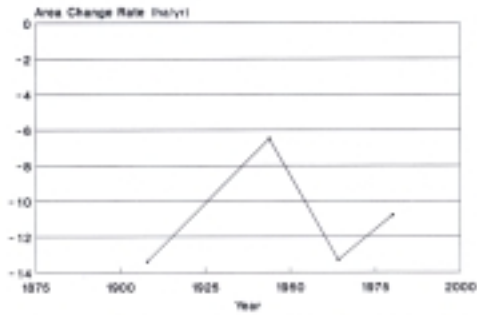


FIGURE 41.—Rate of area change for the Grand Terre Islands between 1884 and 1988.

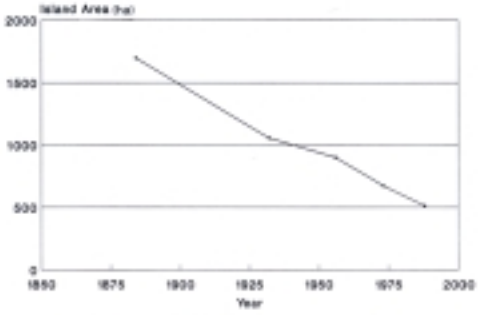
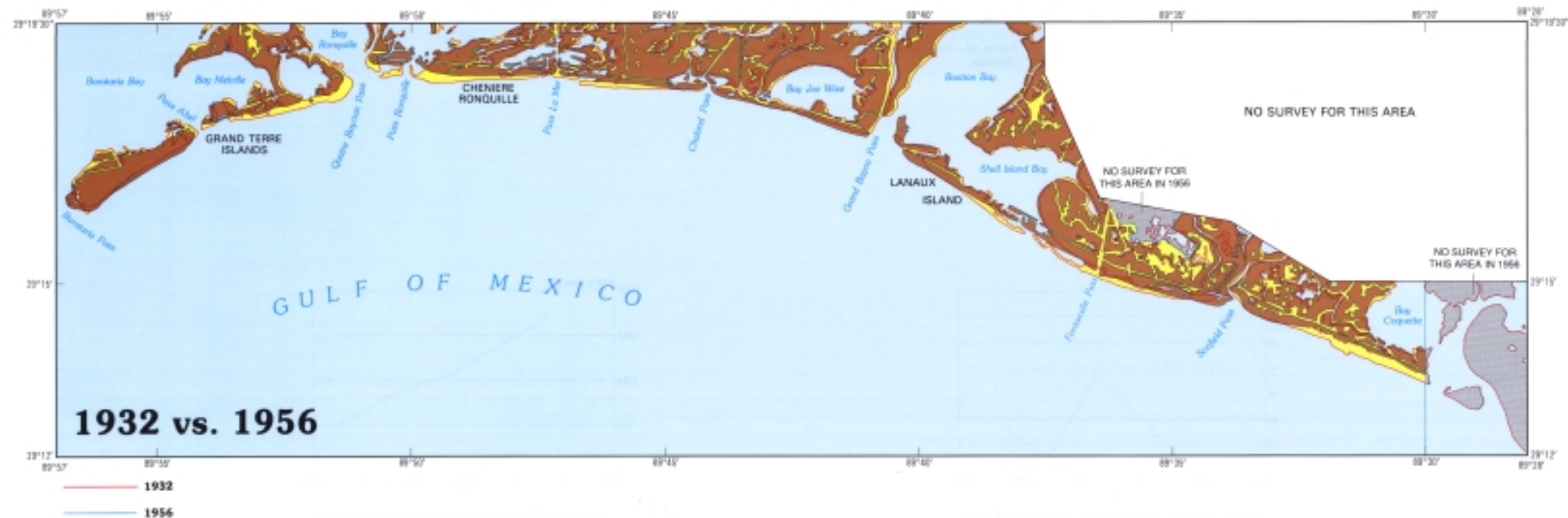
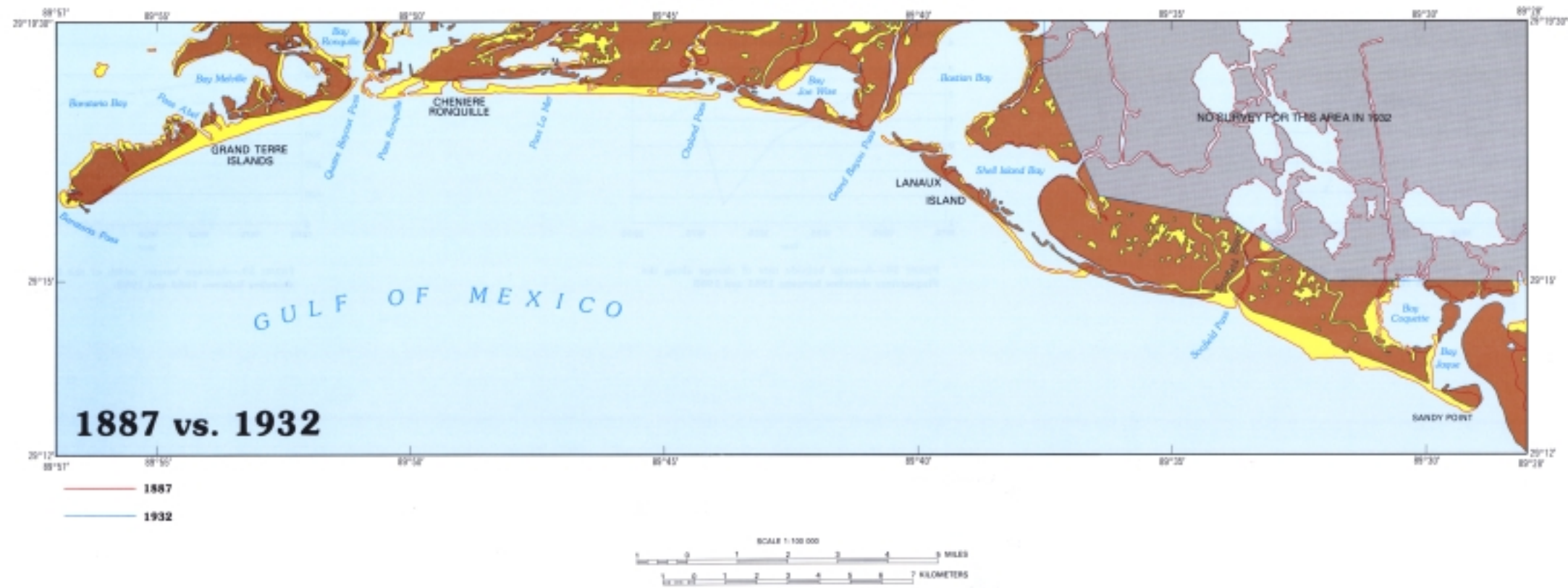


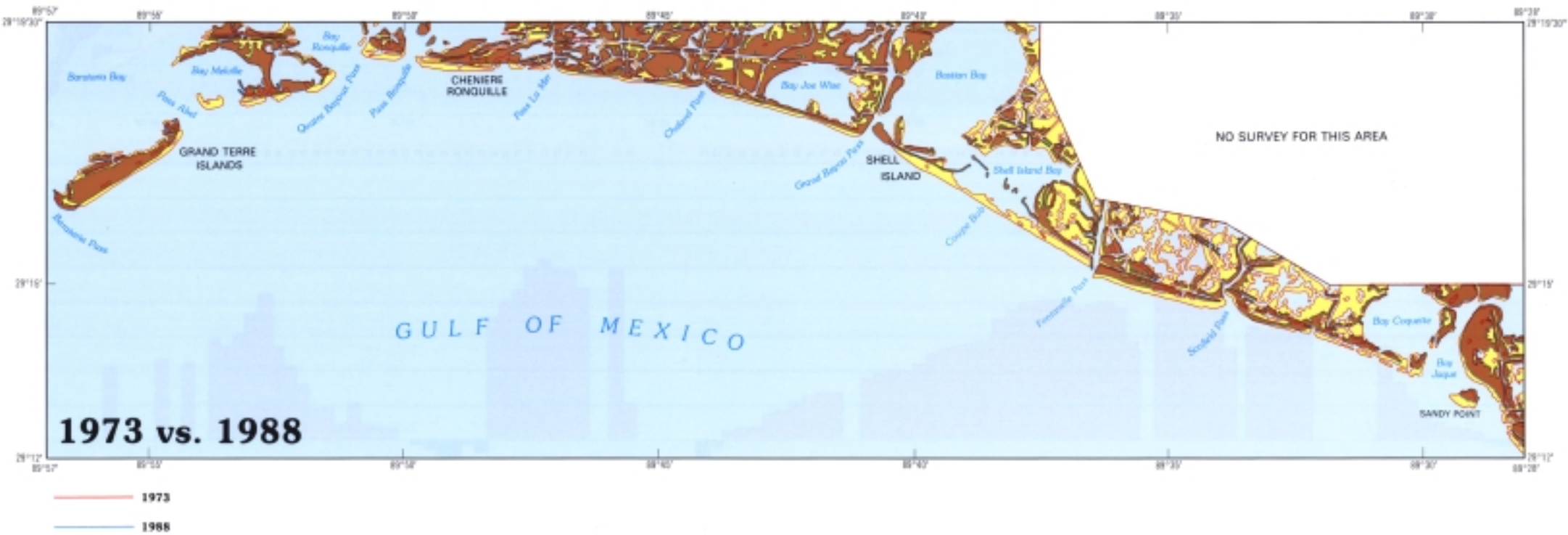
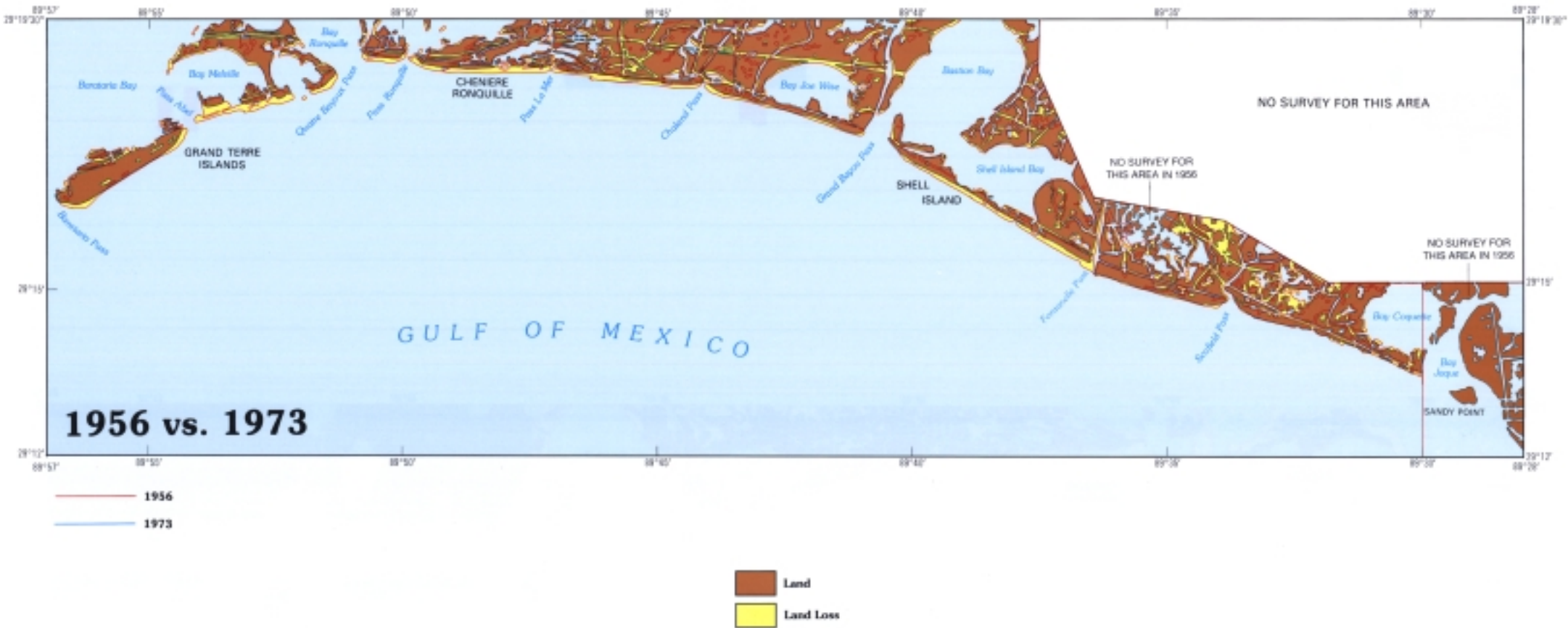
FIGURE 42.—Area changes for the Grand Terre Islands between 1884 and 1988.

Plaquemines

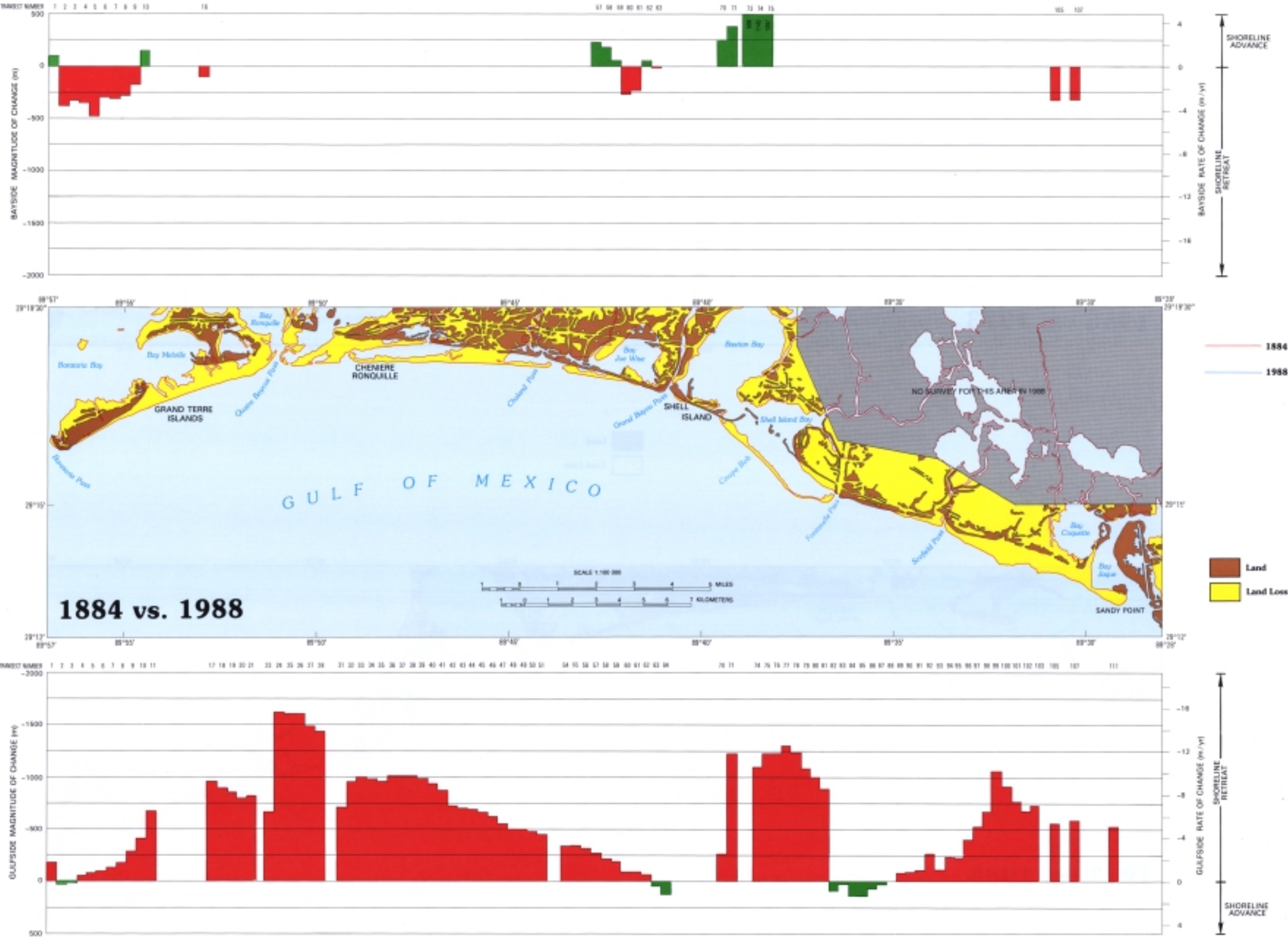
• **Shoreline Change and Land Loss** •

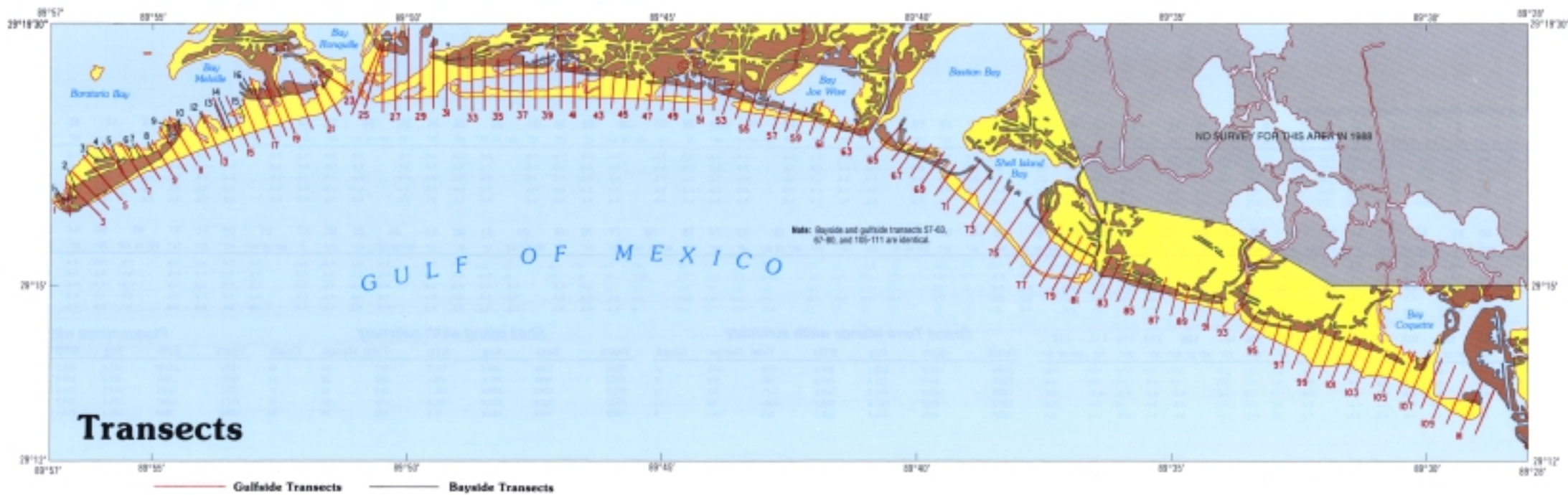


Plaquemines



Plaquemines



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Transect coordinate	89° 58' 40" 30"	15°	89° 58' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 56' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 54' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 52' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 50' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 48' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 46' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 44' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 42' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 40' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 38' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 36' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 34' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 32' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 30' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 28' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 26' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 24' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 22' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 20' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 18' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 16' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 14' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 12' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 10' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 08' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 06' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 04' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 02' 00" 45"	30"	15°	89° 00' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 58' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 56' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 54' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 52' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 50' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 48' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 46' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 44' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 42' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 40' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 38' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 36' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 34' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 32' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 30' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 28' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 26' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 24' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 22' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 20' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 18' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 16' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 14' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 12' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 10' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 08' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 06' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 04' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 02' 00" 45"	30"	15°	88° 00' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 58' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 56' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 54' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 52' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 50' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 48' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 46' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 44' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 42' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 40' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 38' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 36' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 34' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 32' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 30' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 28' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 26' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 24' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 22' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 20' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 18' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 16' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 14' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 12' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 10' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 08' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 06' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 04' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 02' 00" 45"	30"	15°	87° 00' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 58' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 56' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 54' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 52' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 50' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 48' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 46' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 44' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 42' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 40' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 38' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 36' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 34' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 32' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 30' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 28' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 26' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 24' 00" 45"	30"	15°	86° 22' 00" 45"	30"

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Transect coordinate	88° 58' 48"	30"	15"	88° 58' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 57' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 56' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 55' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 54' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 53' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 52' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 51' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 50' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 49' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 48' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 47' 00"	45"	30"	15"	
Y	1884 - 1932	-7.4	-4.4	2.8	1.1	-1.8	-2.2	-3.9	-4.5	-5.5	-8.8	-7.4	N.A.	-12.1	N.A.	-9.8	-8.1	-7.8	-6.8	-8.6	-6.9	-6.9	-1.8	-10.7	-18.1	-18.1	-12.8	-18.8	-10.8	-10.8	-8.2	-1.3	-8.1	-10.2	-10.2	-10.7	-19.8	-11.4	-13.0	-6.9	-1.9	-10.9	-7.5	-6.9	-8.1	-6.0	-6.9	-8.4	-6.2	-8.3		
Ø	1932 - 1956	2.2	7.0	7.9	4.5	4.0	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.6	9.2	4.4	N.A.	-2.3	N.A.	-8.9	-8.9	-8.9	-8.9	-10.7	N.A.	-12.2	-11.2	-6.7	-8.9	-19.4	-12.0	-6.7	-20.9	-10.7	-11.8	-6.7	-7.4	-6.9	-6.4	-8.4	-6.6	-4.5	0.2	-8.2	-4.9	-18.4	7.1	-7.7	-6.0	-6.7	-6.5	-1.5	-1.9	-1.3		
Ø	1956 - 1973	4.4	-6.1	-6.8	-3.6	-0.7	1.4	3.4	2.6	4.6	-8.8	-12.0	N.A.	N.A.	-10.9	-17.9	N.A.	-13.8	-10.9	-9.1	N.A.	N.A.	-6.2	-6.7	-7.1	-5.6	-6.8	-6.7	N.A.	N.A.	-7.9	-6.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8	-6.1	-7.8
Y	1973 - 1988	2.9	3.0	-0.5	-10.2	-4.7	-8.8	-7.9	-6.3	-4.4	-11.5	-13.6	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	-13.6	5.9	-14.8	N.A.	N.A.	-14.7	-27.1	-22.1	-10.7	-21.8	-11.8	N.A.	N.A.	-10.1	-10.7	-10.8	-12.1	-14.9	-12.2	-6.1	-14.9	-1.9	-8.5	-6.0	-6.1	-8.7	-8.8	-8.9	-9.3	-9.1	-8.8	-9.3	-9.1	-8.8	
Z	1884 - 1988	-0.7	2.2	6.1	-0.5	-0.7	-0.8	-1.5	-1.7	-0.7	-3.9	-4.6	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	-10.2	-6.8	-8.2	-7.8	-7.8	N.A.	-8.4	-13.6	-13.6	-12.4	-14.2	-12.8	N.A.	N.A.	-6.8	-8.1	-6.8	-8.4	-8.2	-8.7	-8.7	-8.7	-8.5	-6.0	-8.4	-7.0	-8.5	-8.6	-8.4	-6.9	-6.9	-4.9	-4.9	-4.9	

Transect #	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	
Transect coordinate	30"	15"	88° 46' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 45' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 44' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 43' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 42' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 41' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 40' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 39' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 38' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 37' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 36' 00"	45"	30"	15"	88° 35' 00"	45"	30"	15"
Y	1884 - 1932	-7.2	-7.4	N.A.	2	-7.1	-5.7	-5.8	-6.2	-5.6	-8.2	-1.5	-1.7	-1.9	-8.1	2.5	N.A.	-1.7	0.2	2.5	N.A.	2.4	-8.4	-1.5	-1.7	-1.0	-4.0	N.A.	-13.3	-16.2	-10.8	-7.9	-6.8	5.4	5.9															

Plaquemines

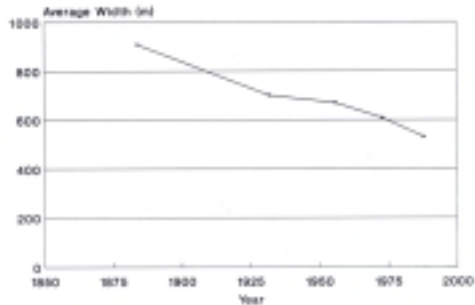


FIGURE 43.—Average barrier width of the Grand Terre Islands between 1884 and 1988.

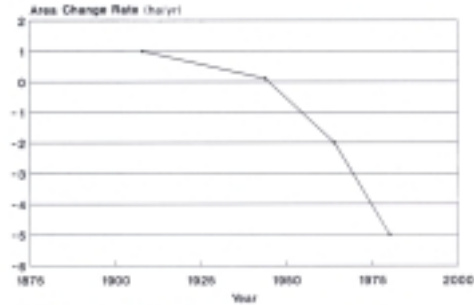


FIGURE 44.—Rate of area change of Shell Island between 1884 and 1988.



FIGURE 45.—Area changes of Shell Island between 1884 and 1988.



FIGURE 46.—Average barrier width of Shell Island between 1884 and 1988.

TABLE 29.—Area changes for Grand Terre Island from 1884 to 1988

Date	Area (ft ²)	Change (ft ²)	% Change	Rate (ft ² /yr)	Projected Date of Disappearance
1884	1,889				
1932	1,066	-641	-38%	-13.4	2011
1932	1,066				
1956	801	-157	-15%	-6.5	2086
1956	801				
1973	675	-226	-26%	-13.3	2024
1973	675				
1988	513	-162	-24%	-10.6	2086
1884	1,699				
1988	513	-1,186	-70%	-11.4	2033

TABLE 30.—Area Changes for the Shell Island from 1884 to 1988

Date	Area (ft ²)	Change (ft ²)	% Change	Rate (ft ² /yr)	Projected Date of Disappearance
1884	127				
1932	175	48	38%	1.0	N.A.
1932	175				
1956	178	3	0%	0.1	N.A.
1956	178				
1973	144	-34	-19%	-2.0	2045
1973	114				
1988	69	-75	-52%	-5.0	2062
1884	127				
1988	69	-68	-68%	-0.6	2103